CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY





THE SITUATION IN VIETNAM

Information as of 1600 30 March 1966

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ARMY review(s) completed.

TOP SECRET

State Dept. review completed



30 March 1966

HIGHLIGHTS

Company-size US Army elements were heavily engaged by Viet Cong forces near the Communist redoubt around Chu Pong Mountain in Pleiku Province today. Some of the US elements have apparently been withdrawn, but at least one American unit is reported still under fire. The political agitation against the Ky government, meanwhile, seems to be taking an increasingly anti-American turn. There was protest activity today in I Corps, with some of the demonstrators openly criticizing the activities of US Marine Corps units in the area.

- I. The Military Situation in South Vietnam: Heavy fighting was reported early today between elements of the US 1st Air Cavalry Division and possibly 1,000 Viet Cong/PAVN troops during the conduct of Operation LINCOLN in southwestern Pleiku Province (Para. 1). Multibattalion task force elements of the US 1st Infantry Division and Royal Australian Regiment have launched Operation ABILENE against an estimated 5,800 Viet Cong in Phuoc Tuy Province (Para. 4). USAF B-52s last night attacked a Viet Cong target complex in Tay Ninh Province (Para. 5). Viet Cong terrorists exploded a bomb near a USAF billet in Saigon yesterday (Para. 6). The weekly review of South Vietnam battle statistics has been received from MACV (Para. 9).
- II. Political Developments in South Vietnam: Protest activity flared up today in I Corps, with transport workers' demonstrations in Hue and Saigon; a new incident involving US marines provided an excuse for increasingly violent anti-American propaganda (Paras. 1-4). The demonstrations threaten to spread to other towns including Saigon, where a Buddhist ceremony tomorrow is expected to be a cover for an antigovernment protest (Para. 5).

efforts to infiltrate the "struggle" movement, and are planning intensive precautions against trouble in Saigon (Paras. 6-7). Catholic priest Father Quynh has issued a clarification of his weekend attack on the Ky government, reiterating his dissatisfaction with the pace of restoring representative rule, but urging public restraint (Para. 8).

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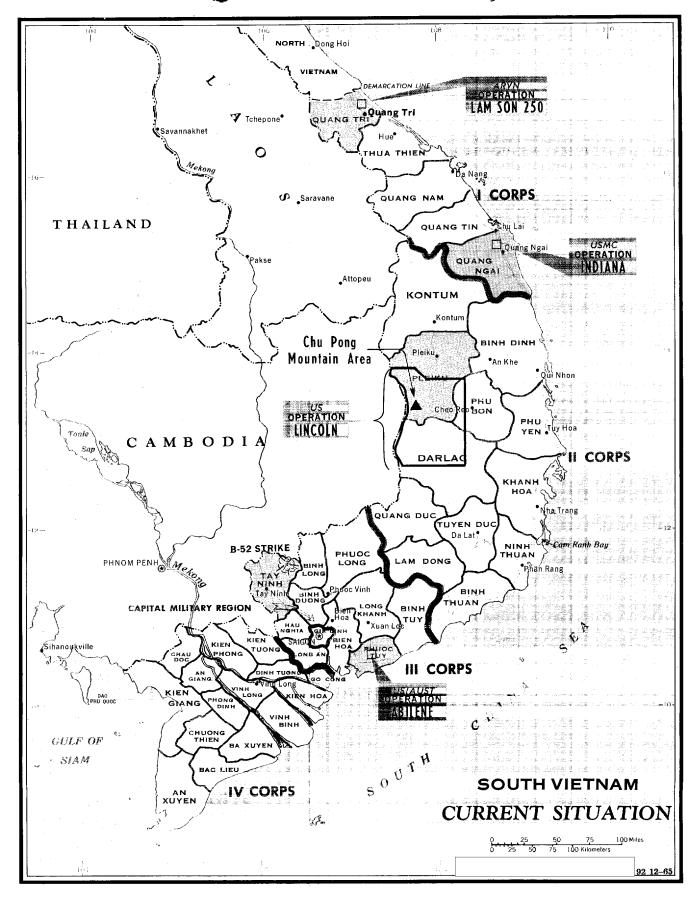
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- There is nothing of significance to report.
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- V. Communist Political Developments: Peking and Hanoi are describing the Viet Cong attack on the ARVN 1st Regiment camp northeast of Saigon on 23 March as a revolt by ARVN forces. The Communists apparently hope to foster unrest among government troops (Paras. 1-3). A high-level Chinese transportation delegation has arrived in the DRV in another indication of the importance Hanoi and Peking assign to maintaining of adequate transportation links between China and North Vietnam (Para. 4). Press reports that Chen Yi had stated China would enter the war if Hanoi or Haiphong were bombed are apparently not correct (Para. 5).

30 March 1966

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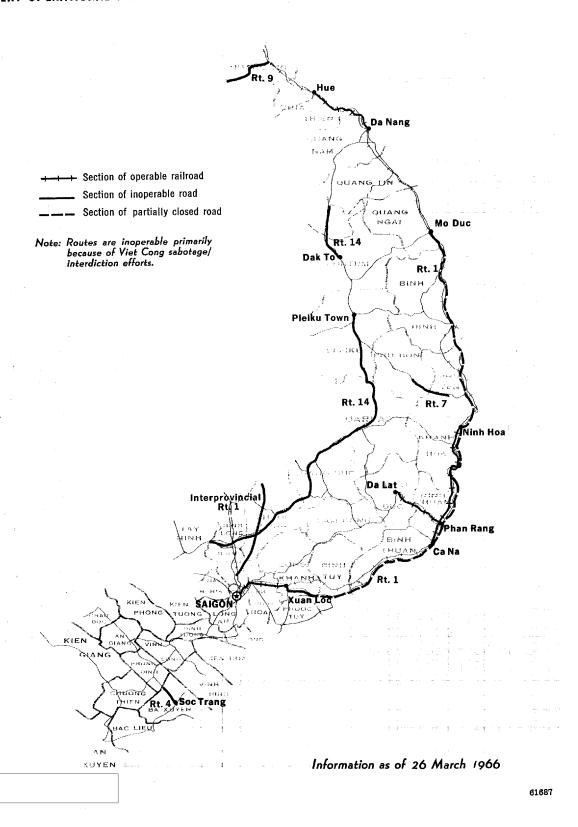
I. THE MILITARY SITUATION IN SOUTH VIETNAM

- 1. Company-strength elements of the US 1st Air Cavalry Division, participating in the five-battalion US search-and-destroy Operation LINCOLN, reported heavy contact early today with large-scale Communist forces in southwestern Pleiku Province near the Chu Pong Mountain. Four US Army medical evacuation helicopters and one giant CH-47 "Chinook" helicopter have been downed by enemy ground fire; the fate of the crews is not known at this time. MACV's preliminary reports of casualties suffered by the two US companies involved, one of which has now been extricated, show a total of eight killed and 32 wounded. A Communist soldier, captured in the early stages of the fighting and subsequently killed by enemy fire, reported the presence of at least 1,000 Viet Cong/PAVN troops in the area.
- 2. Battalion-strength USMC task force elements have terminated Operation INDIANA in northeast Quang Ngai Province. The three-day reaction/pursuit ground sweep against an estimated two battalions of the 1st Viet Cong Regiment resulted in Communist losses of 69 killed, one captured, and 19 weapons seized. Ten US Marines were killed and 44 wounded.
- 3. Search-and-destroy Operation LAM SON 250 by three ARVN battalions near Quang Tri city, the capital of South Vietnam's northernmost province, has been terminated after three days. Viet Cong losses have been placed at 58 killed, six captured, and 25 weapons seized, as against government casualties of 35 killed and 82 wounded.
- 4. Six battalions of the US 1st Infantry Division and one Australian battalion yesterday initiated Operation ABILENE, a 15-day search-and-destroy ground sweep in Phuoc Tuy Province, 35 miles east-southeast of Saigon. No contact has as yet been established with an estimated force of 5,800 Viet Cong troops reported to be in the area.

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CURRENT OPERATIONAL STATUS OF MAJOR TRANSPORTATION ROUTES AND COASTAL RAILROAD



- 5. Fifteen USAF B-52 Stratofortresses last night attacked a Viet Cong controlled target complex reportedly containing a training center and a suspected PAVN regiment in the northeastern portion of Tay Ninh Province. Poststrike ground exploitation operations were not scheduled.
- 6. Viet Cong terrorists yesterday exploded a 20-pound plastic charge, mounted on a bicycle, near a USAF BOQ in Saigon, injuring one American and one Vietnamese civilian.

Status of Communications Routes

- 7. There was no significant improvement during the period 19-26 March in the operational status of South Vietnam's major highways. The opening of portions of Route 1 in Quang Tin, Quang Ngai, and Long Khanh provinces, and of portions of routes 14, 19, 20, and 4 in other provinces was offset by the closure of Route 9 in Darlac Province and portions of routes 7 and 4. There was no change in the operational status of the nation's coastal railway during the reporting period.
- 8. This week (19-26 Mar) as compared with last week (12-19 Mar):

WEEKLY REVIEW OF SOUTH VIETNAM BATTLE STATISTICS

I. Viet Cong Incidents

Time <u>Period</u>	At- tacks	Regimental- size	Battalion- size	Company- size	Ter-
12-19 Mar	12	0	4	1	412
19-26 Mar	15	0	3	4	671
Time Period.	Sabotag	re <u>Propaga</u>	Ant nda Airc	i- raft	Total Incidents
12-19 Mar	47	14	26	55	750
19-26 Mar	57	61	26	0	1,064
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II. Casualties

	VC/F	VC/PAVN		N	
	12-19 Mar	19-26 Mar	12-19 Mar	19-26 Mar	
Killed Wounded Missing/Captured	627 59	1,988 249	232 373 <u>73</u>	318 620 <u>58</u>	
TOTALS	686	2,237	678	996	
	12-19 Mar	US 19-26 Mar	FREE W 12-19 Mar	ORLD 19-26 Mar	
Killed	80	123	8	28	
Wounded	816	515	23	58	
Missing/Captured	<u> 16</u>	$\frac{4}{}$	_0	_0	
TOTALS	912	642	31	86	

III. Weapons

	VC/I	PAVN	GVN		
	12-19 Mar	19-26 Mar	12-19 Mar	19-26 Mar	
Individual Crew-served	$\frac{426}{30}$	390 _ <u>33</u>	262 3	$\frac{276}{4}$	
TOTALS	4.56	423	265	280	

30 March 1966

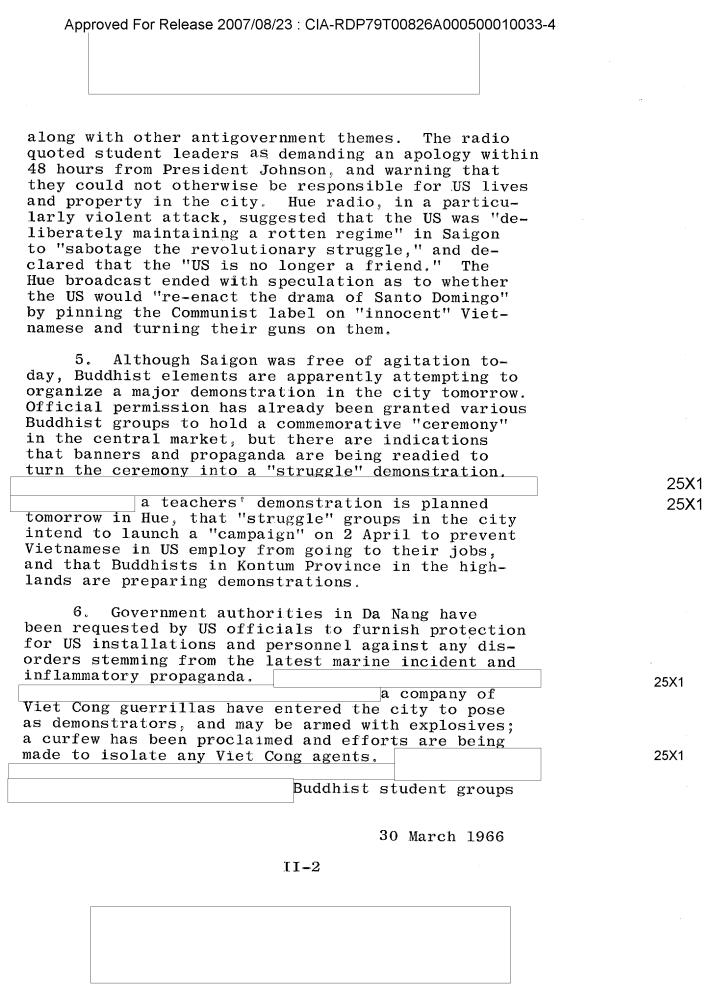
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II. POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN SOUTH VIETNAM

- 1. Protest activity flared up again today in I Corps with an increasingly virulent dose of anti-Americanism. There are indications that further meetings and protests are planned in the coming days in both I Corps and Saigon.
- 2. In Hue, a transportation strike was held as scheduled today, lasting eight hours and with 100 percent effectiveness, although shops remained open. Some 400 vehicles, including busses, Lambrettas,, and private sedans, were massed while their operators listened to speeches by "struggle force" spokesmen denouncing the government and attacking the US for "political interference." Following the strike, about 400 national policement staged a march through the city in support of the "struggle" movement and the Buddhist four-point program.
- A similar demonstration postponed from yesterday, was held in Da Nang. Cyclodrivers and truckers displayed banners with themes similar to those seen in Hue. During the demonstration, a USMC truck attempted to pass two of the vehicles in the demonstration, and grazed one of them; the 12 marines took security precautions as a large crowd gathered. No clashes were reported, but Vietnamese loudspeakers subsequently charged that the marines had killed two Vietnamese, and a crowd of some 2,000 persons converged in front of a marine security billet in the city. The crowd dispersed after the US consul and the US Marine commanding general met with the mayor of Da Nang at the site of the protest and offered apologies, which were refused.
- 4. The municipal radio in Da Nang, which returned to the air today after several days of silence, has been playing up the marine incident

30 March 1966

II-1



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planning to demonstrate tomorrow, and may attempt to provoke anti-American incidents.

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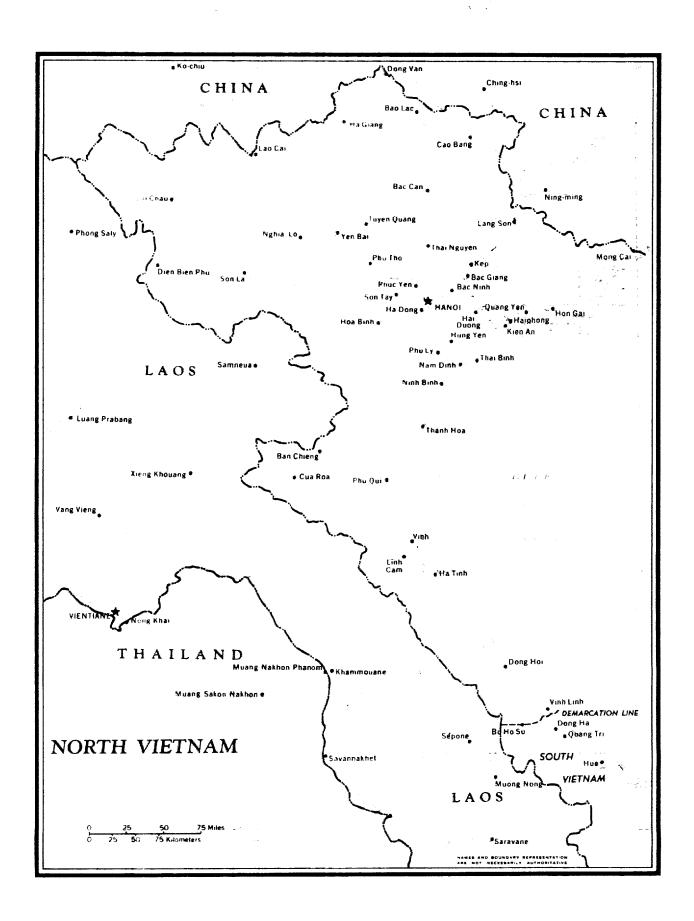
a Viet Cong directive, issued in the delta, contains orders to exploit the present unrest by all means, from infiltrating dissident circles to stepping up sabotage and undermining local administration.

- 7. An aide to Premier Ky has informed the US Embassy that the government is determined to prevent any untoward incidents in Saigon in connection with tomorrow's Buddhist ceremony. A Vietnamese marine battalion and other troops will be available in the event of any disorders, and US personnel are being advised to avoid the market area. The embassy also has a report that Tri Quang has returned to Saigon from Hue. His return may be for the purpose of organizing demonstrations in Saigon, although an earlier report indicated that he had been ordered to give an account of his activities in Hue to the Buddhist Institute.
- 8. Catholic priest Father Quynh today published a clarification of his weekend attack on the Ky regime in the newspaper Xay Dung, a mouthpiece for Quynh's views. Quynh reiterated his dissatisfaction with the pace of the government's progress toward restoring representative government, but followed the lead of the Saigon archdiocese "liaison bureau" in urging restraint by the public. He noted specifically that free elections could not be guaranteed in present circumstances, and stressed that there "must be sincere cooperation between the military and civilians."

30 March 1966

II-3

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III.	MILITARY	DEVELOPA	MENTS	IN NOR	RTH VI	ETNAM	<u>1</u>	
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V. COMMUNIST POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

- In an unusual propaganda ploy, Hanoi and Peking have claimed that an attack on the ARVN 1st Armored Regiment on 23 March by Viet Cong troops dressed in ARVN uniforms was actually a revolt by ARVN forces. Peking Radio on 29 March asserted that the attack took the form of an uprising by the "patriotic officers and men" of the ARVN 1st Armored The Chinese hailed it as a "new hallmark Regiment. which signifies that the South Vietnamese puppet forces are disintegrating more and more rapidly." Hanoi Radio on 30 March quoted a party daily editorial which "welcomed the courageous revolt" of the 1st Armored Regiment and hailed it as a "new turning point in the inevitable collapse of the puppet army."
- 2. This is not the first instance in which Viet Cong troops dressed in ARVN uniforms have attacked ARVN forces, but it seems to have been one of the more successful. The ARVN-uniformed Viet Cong managed to penetrate the defense perimeter of the 1st Armored Regiment camp and seized a tank. Apparently a number of the ARVN defenders fled the camp in tanks; some of them stopped only when they had almost reached Saigon.
- 3. Hanoi and Peking, after reviewing reports of the battle and noting the confusion caused by the Viet Cong ruse, apparently decided to play it up as an ARVN revolt, hoping both to encourage actual revolts by government troops and to foster the notion that the South Vietnamese regular forces are tiring of the war. The line may have been suggested to them by certain anti-American and antiwar overtones which have turned up in some of the recent Hue and Da Nang demonstrations.

30 March 1966

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Sino-DRV Transportation Discussions
4. The current visit to North Vietnam of a delegation led by Peking's minister of communications provides further indication of the importance which Hanoi and Peking attach to the maintenance of adequate transport links between China and the DRV. The visit of this group, which is charged with the direction of both sea and highway transport in China, follows an extended visit to the DRV in January and February by a Chinese railway delegation. The visits are probably related to the economic agreements signed by Peking and Hanoi late last year, possibly involving discussions of the delivery of currently scheduled Chinese aid. The Chinese may also undertake some survey of further DRV aid requirements in the transportation field.
Chinese Military Intervention
5. Press reports quoting Chen Yi as having told a visiting Philippine senator that Communist China would "enter the war" if either Hanoi or Haiphong were bombed are apparently incorrect.
The Chinese have never committed themselves to a specific response in the event that Hanoi or Haiphong is bombed, although they apparently sought to circulate the notion privately last summer that US air strikes against the DRV capital and principal port would bring China into the warstories probably intended to deter the US from further escalation.

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30 March 1966

V-2

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